

false tranquillity for health. Paris sighed and fell into convulsions. The rather colourless Queen, who called de Retz a very wicked man, is naturally regarded as a foe, though he was quite ready to take Masarin's place at her side if the wheel of fortune swung towards him. Gaston, Duke of Orleans, uncle of the young King, is dismissed as a coward whose dominant passion was fear. Condé, the best of a bad lot, excites admiration as a soldier, a fine heart and mind, but he was too impatient and had too little judgment to be a statesman. ** If he had carried out his good intentions with prudence he would have restored the state, perhaps for centuries. Equally, if he had had evil intentions, he could have done anything, have been a greater Guise, at a time when the King was a minor, the Queen obstinate, Orleans feeble, Maaarin not up to his task, the people undisciplined, the Parlements factious." Among the ladies of the Fronde Mmede Longueville and Mme de Chevreuse, stand out most clearly. If we are to judge by the testimony of de Retz, the main occupations of the aristocracy in the middle decades of the seventeenth century were gallantry and political intrigue.

When the Regent Orleans, learning that the Memoirs of de Retz were about to appear, asked d'Argenson, the Lieutenant of Police, what effect the 'book would have, he received the reply : " Nothing to worry about, Sir. The frankness with which he speaks of himself, his faults, his failure, will not encourage any one to imitate him/" The born Frondeur, the artist in intrigue, had not made a success of his life, and he knew it. The attempt of the Fronde to limit the power of the Crown was premature. Benjamin Constant compared him to Machiavelli in his frank acceptance of the baseness of human nature, and Chesterfield pronounced his political reflections the only just and practical maxims he had ever

read. Yet he
was a gambler not a statesman. Loving
adventure even more
than power, he never reached and never
deserved to reach the
highest place, though for a brief space he was
a maker of
history. These full-blooded volumes help us to
understand
how necessary it was for Louis XIV to restore
the prestige of
the Monarchy after the crown had been kicked
about in the
streets of Paris.

One evening in 1714, the last year of his life,
Le Roi Soleil
sent the Due de Noailles to fetch papers from
his Cabinet,
written in his own hand, which he desired to
burn. When
some of them concerning persons had been
destroyed, the